



Friend's Ranches

Growers, packers and shippers of fine Ojai citrus
member of the Ojai Pixie Growers Association

Secretary A.G. Kawamura, State Board President, Al Montna
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Promote Local Food Use: Certified Farmers' Markets & Institutional Produce Supplies

Too often our food production is based on exporting our crops as historically more money has been fetched with exports while strengthening the domestic market. With current transportation costs and the reality of foreign competition in a world market some emphasis should be placed on ensuring that all sectors of our own communities have access to the abundance of clean, fresh produce we grow within our own state and country. CDFA should support local marketing though supporting Certified farmers' markets and institutional produce purchasing.

Farmers' Markets: Many small farms across the state rely on farmers' markets as a place to sell specialty crops or varieties that do not have a place in the mainstream wholesale channels. Quite a few of these farms are run by minorities and may not have the time or means to make their voices heard. The state should do all they can to uphold standards of farmers' markets and encourage the viability of small farms. This system can be self-sustaining through the judicious use of fees charged to run the markets.

Institutional Produce Supplies: Research shows that food choices for life are made at a very young age. If all California schools were to use fresh produce grown in California it would do great good for farms, children and their families. Similar programs should be done with other institutions such as hospitals and prisons.

Exotic Pest Research and Exclusion

State and Federal government should do all they can to ensure that exotic pests are excluded from entering the country and California. Funding for research, detection, quarantine and eradication should be upheld and supplemented. The current ongoing saga of the Light Brown Apple Moth is an embarrassment that has pitted the public against agriculture as well as government agencies. This should not have happened. A concise set of rules on exclusion, detection, quarantine and eradication should be in place and accurately followed for future instances of exotic pest detection. There is no excuse to put the crops of our state (and country) at risk of destruction from foreign pests. Severe penalties should be enforced just as they are for arson on public lands.

Fruit flavor and seedless standards

In order to ensure a place in the global marketplace California should be the leader in standards. The state should review the minimum maturity standards of using fruit sugar to acid levels. Science now shows that market acceptability standards should be based on consumer taste. Current research lead by Mary Lu Arpaia with the University of California indicates clearly that the current standards (using only the current low sugar/acid ratio) for citrus is unacceptable when tasting tests have been carried out. Research on minimum maturity standards should be supported and the findings used to re-evaluate state standards.

The standards for seedlessness should also be reviewed. The incoming surge of foreign mandarins as well as those grown within the state of California need a solid market standard which should include: 1) a label for truly 'seedless' (suggested maximum of one seed per 100 fruit) and 2) for 'miminal seeds' (suggested up to 2 seeds per fruit).

Encourage and Use Research Boards/ University Research

Entities such as the Citrus Research Board provide a great service to the agricultural community. The CRB is funded by growers and the work carried out is done well and should be used to reevaluate the way our industry is run. CDFA should work closely with these industry-supported research organizations.

Thanks you for considering these issues we feel important to the future of Agriculture in California.

Sincerely,

Emily Ayala and Tony Thacher
Friend's Ranches, Ojai, Calif